

Preparation for the Year 2000 Computer Bug or Y2K

By now, you have probably heard of the Y2K Bug. It involves both computers and other electronic devices with embedded controller chips. In both types of equipment, the computing logic in the hardware may become confused by certain dates. Computers may recognize the Year 2000 as 1900 if the programs and chips in them are older versions due to the way programs have been written in the past. Though the Macintosh line of computers and the Macintosh Operating System from Apple Computer have been claimed to be Y2K compliant, they may have problems with some of the older software written for them by non-Apple sources. Computer chips embedded in electronic equipment may have similar problems if they are required to use dates as a part of their processes. At the end of this page you will find links to other Internet sources related to the Y2K Bug and preparedness activities.

Many experts have suggested that this Bug will cause many problems during 1999 and the Year 2000 and beyond such as power and communications interruptions, banking and finance delays, and disruptions in the delivery systems for food and fuel. Depending who you talk to, you may hear different levels of concern and opinions as to how bad these disruptions will be. We advise that you study the situation carefully before making decisions on your lifestyle based on predicted Y2K Bug problems. We have been researching the problem for well over a year now, and are changing our prediction for the probable impacts often. We will update this page as new information is learned and as better knowledge of the risks become known. Many of those purporting to be experts are also trying to sell you a product of one sort or another, sometimes at greatly inflated costs compared to what you would pay if you went out and bought similar items in the community. They are also the ones that are claiming the impacts of the Y2K Bug are going to be much more catastrophic than the risk assessments known to date would predict. Please use caution and logical thought when studying the Y2K Bug issue.

Other sources for descriptions about the Y2K Bug problem:

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Y2K Hotline:
1-888-USA-4Y2K (1-888-872-4925)
- FEMA Y2K Web Site: <http://www.fema.gov/y2k>
- General Services Administration Y2K Web Site:
<http://www.itpolicy.gsa.gov/mks/yr2000/y2khome.htm>
- Small Business Administration Y2K Web Site: <http://www.sba.gov/y2k/>

Because the Y2K and other date bugs are likely to cause some interruptions to critical needs, much like that of a major storm, we would like to offer some preparedness activities as suggestions to be ready for them. By doing some emergency preparedness for Y2K, you will also be ready for any other disaster that is likely to visit our area. First of all, it is important to remain calm. Everything we have studied from legitimate sources suggests that most areas of concern will be ready for Y2K. Any failures of power, water, and sewage systems will be short and brought quickly back into use. The major power producers have been testing their systems and found that a large-scale failure is not at all likely. You will notice that the preparations recommended here are very much the same as you should take for any other potential disaster. As always, you should be able to take care of yourself for at least 3 days. It takes disaster response activities of government that long to get operational. To be thoroughly prepared, you might consider having up to a week or two's worth of supplies on hand. You do not need to go out and buy expensive long-term storage materials, but simply buy non-perishable items, tools, and materials from local stores.

- ✓ ***Food and Water*** - An easy way to stockpile a two-week supply of food is to buy an extra couple of cans of food or bags of dried goods each time you go shopping. Before long you will have built up a goodly supply. Be sure to buy what you like to eat and to rotate the older items for newer as time goes by. That way your supplies will always be fresh. Buy a mechanical can opener since the electric one you probably have now won't work if the power fails. Water storage should equal 2 gallons of water per day per person in your house. Sealed gallon containers of water can be purchased at the grocery and have a shelf life of at least 6 months. Camping type water containers can be purchased, or you can reuse gallon milk and juice containers for making your own water storage system. Be sure to wash the container thoroughly and add 8 drops of unscented household chlorine bleach to each gallon of water stored to keep bacteria and other organisms from growing. By storing some of these containers in your extra freezer space, you will actually help your freezer from running so often and save electricity. Later, if the power goes out, you will have extra ice on hand to keep perishable foods for several extra days. The water will still be drinkable. Also, remember that your hot water heater has 30 to 50 gallons of potable water in it. Don't forget to have an adequate supply of food for your pets.
- ✓ ***Family Records*** - You should go through your family records now and have written copies of everything you may need such as birth certificates, proof of citizenship, insurance policies, bank accounts, investment information, credit cards, immunization records, and prescriptions. If there is a failure of computers at banks, investment firms, doctors' offices and so forth, your written records may speed up the process of getting your accounts back in order. You should store these valuable papers in a safe, fire resistant place. It might be a good idea to have a little extra cash on hand at the turn of the year in case there are failures in credit card or ATM machines, but don't drain your accounts. You will just be setting yourself up for theft or loss.

- ✓ **Medical Devices** - If you or someone in your family has any kind of medical device that requires electricity, you need to work with your family physician or the company that manufactures the device to get battery backup for it. You may consider having a plan to move quickly to where there will be electrical backup if needed, or purchase a generator and have your home's electrical system modified to be able to use it. If you chose the last plan, you should purchase the generator now and have the modifications to your house that is required since there may be high demand for that later. Also, check with the company to make sure the device is Y2K compliant; in other words, that it doesn't contain any computer chips or programming that will cause it to fail in the New Year. Be very firm about insisting for compliance information.

- ✓ **Miscellaneous Emergency Supplies**

An alternate-cooking device such as a camp stove (use only outdoors).

Fuel for above (store only outdoors).

Matches.

Flashlight with extra batteries.

Battery or solar powered radio.

Full gas tanks for your cars.

Candles, chemical light sticks, or camping lanterns (with fuel).

Unscented household bleach (for sanitizing water).

First aid kit.

Sleeping bags or extra blankets (it isn't that cold in the Phoenix area in January, but it could be uncomfortably cool if the power is off for a couple days).

Warm clothes including coats, gloves, and hat for everyone in your family.

New batteries in your smoke alarms.

Non-electric can opener.

Extra garbage bags.

Gloves.

Shovel.

Shut-off wrench for your gas service.

Simple tool kit with screwdrivers, pliers, hammer, nails, basic wrench set.

Roll of duct tape.

Roll of visqueen plastic.

Roll of clothesline.

Several 5 gallon buckets.

Garden hose.

- ✓ **Sanitation** - If sewer and water systems fail, do not attempt to use the toilets in your home. They may back up and cause a sanitation nightmare. A temporary toilet can be made using a 5-gallon bucket double-lined with garbage bags. A small splash of bleach after each use will help to keep the temporary toilet sanitized. Do not use the toilet after it is more than 1/4 full. Tie off the bags and store outside until after the emergency for proper disposal in the municipal sewage system. It is very important to wash your hands frequently to prevent sickness and the spread of disease.

Washing the areas where food is prepared with a bleach and water solution is recommended (1 part bleach to 10 parts water).

Some Internet sources for Y2K preparedness include:

- Red Cross Y2K Preparedness Web Site
<http://www.redcross.org/disaster/safety/y2k.html>
- Marin County Y2K Web Site:
<http://www.marin.org/midas/y2k/y2kGuide.pdf>
- Napa Valley Citizens for Year 2000 Preparedness:
<http://www.y2knapa.com/familyprep.html>
- UTNE Y2K Preparedness:
<http://www.utne.com/y2k/individual.html>
- The Cassandra Project:
<http://www.cassandraproject.org/home.html>

What is Maricopa County doing to prepare?

Maricopa County has been doing a major Y2K mitigation effort for several years now. Within its own departments, computer systems are being tested and updated. Systems that may contain embedded chips are being researched. When these checks are complete, each department will be required to have a contingency plan in place for all critical processes and systems. This is in case the tests and upgrades were not enough to prevent all failures or in case there are failures outside of the County systems that cause our systems to fail. The County feels very confident that it will be ready for the Year 2000 well before January 1st.

Since the County cannot be sure of what outside failures may occur; and to help other entities come into Y2K compliance, workshops will be held through 1999 to help others prepare. The Department of Emergency Management will be conducting disaster exercises to test its plans. It will activate the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in September to practice for a response to a Y2K related scenario. The EOC will be activated the night of 12-31-99 to be ready for a disaster response for any Y2K related failures in the County. It will be surveying all of the cities and towns that night for problems and will assist them with responding to any problems that may occur. We expect there to be some failures and interruptions in the County, but there is every indication that they will be short-lived. We also expect to be ready for whatever occurrence there might be and plan to work with all of the municipalities to make sure the impact of such occurrences is minimal.